Thomas Yale, LL.D. (c. 1526–1577)

Origin and Family

Born c. 1526. Died Nov 1577.

Father: David Lloyd ap Ellis (c. 1487–c. 1570)
Mother: Gwenhwyfar (c. 1511–c. 1580), daughter of Richard Lloyd ap Robert Lloyd of Llwyn y Maen.
Spouse: Joanna, daughter of Nicolas Waleron.[4] The church at the time was changing its position regarding marriage of clergy members, and in 1561 Thomas was able to marry Joanna. Joanna was previously married to William May, the elected Lord Archbishop of York and the President of Queens' College, Cambridge.

Thomas Yale and his older brother John Yale represent the first ancestors with the surname of Yale – a surname that has endured for over five centuries.

Although the Yale line shows the Yales of America descended from John Yale, there is a strong possibility that the Yales are actually descended from Thomas Yale, as he may be the biological father of Dr. David Yale instead of John.

Thomas's brother John is said to have had a child, David Lloyd (Dr. David Yale), by Agnes Lloyd[1] but there is no marriage record. Thomas took an unusually active role in David's upbringing and stewardship, leading some to speculate that Thomas may have been the boy's biological father, concealing the truth because of his position in the church and the legal restrictions on clerical children during this time. The Dictionary of Welsh Biography supports the unusual nature of this relationship, noting that David Lloyd Yale 'followed his uncle' to Queens' College and 'succeeded to his uncle's prebend'—career milestones that mirror Thomas's own path exactly.[2] This would be a normal path for a biological son but unusual for a nephew.

This conjecture is further strengthened by the bequests in Thomas Yale's 1577 will (PROB 11/59).[3] Thomas named him as a primary executor of his estate, provided the specific financial means for David to complete his doctorate at Queens' College, Cambridge, and entrusted him with the stewardship of the family's Welsh properties and the Yale Chapel - a level of patronage far exceeding that shown to his other nephews.

Occupation and Property

Thomas Yale had a long ecclesiastical and legal career. "Thomas Yale (1525/6 – 1577) was the Chancellor and Vicar general of the Head of the Church of England: Matthew Parker, 1st Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, and Edmund Grindal, Bishop of London. He was also Dean of the Arches at the Court of High Commission, during the Elizabethan Religious Settlement."[7]

"As Dean of the Arches, he was the most senior judge of the Church of England from 1567 to 1573. After Archbishop Grindal's suspension in 1577, he obtained the command of the Province of Canterbury, governing two-thirds of the ecclesiastical territories of England, and the entirety of Wales, during the Elizabethan Age."[7]

The *Dictionary of Welsh Biography* has this entry:[2] "THOMAS YALE (c. 1526 - 1577), ecclesiastical lawyer, third son of David Lloyd (Yale) [aka David Lloyd ab Ellis] by Gwenhwyfar

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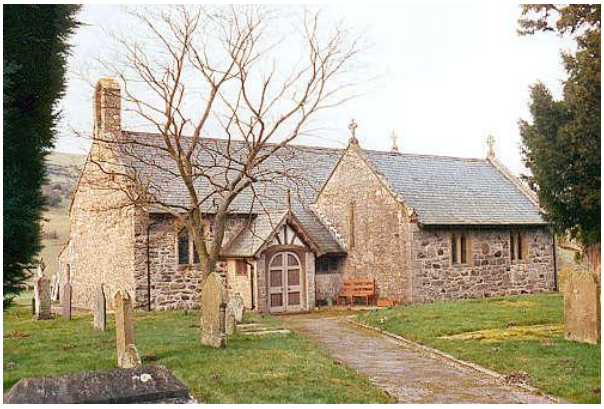
Lloyd of Llwyn-y-maen, was educated at Queens' College, Cambridge, of which he became Fellow (1544-67) on taking his bachelor's degree. Ten years after proceeding to M.A. (1546) he was admitted to minor orders (24 Sept. 1556) by bishop William Glyn, who inducted him to the rectory of Llantrisant (Anglesey) a few weeks later. He never resided there, qualifying instead for a legal career by becoming LL.D. (1557) and advocate of the court of Canterbury (1559) - in time to take a prominent part in legal arrangements for the appointment to Canterbury of Matthew Parker, who made him his chancellor, vicar-general, and judge of the court of audience, and used him as his right-hand man, sending him on many visitations, including two of Bangor (1566 and 1576)—the latter with Nicholas Robinson—and naming him as executor in his will. From 1562 to 1570 he was chancellor of Bangor diocese and from 1564 to 1573 prebendary of Faenol (S. Asaph), rated at 200 marks a year. He was Dean of Arches from 1567 to 1573, and on 12 July 1570 was made joint keeper, with Parker's son, of the prerogative court of Canterbury. When Grindal became archbishop in 1576 he consulted Yale and William Awbrey on the reform of the ecclesiastical courts, and on Grindal's sequestration, Yale administered the whole province till his fatal illness in Nov. 1577, when he was succeeded by Awbrey."[2]

The ancient **St. Tysilio Church at Bryneglwys** is recorded as an existing benefice in the 1291 Papal Taxation of England and Wales (Taxatio Ecclesiastica), confirming its medieval origin.[5] About 1575, a Yale Chapel was added by Thomas Yale.[6]



St. Tysilio Church at Bryneglwys. The Yale Chapel (right) added in 1575 by Thomas Yale, LLD, to house the family vault

End of Life

Thomas Yale passed away in Nov 1577.[2] He was buried at St. Gregory's Church by St. Paul's in London.[4] The church was entirely destroyed in the Great Fire of 1666 and was never rebuilt. Its former location is now part of the modern cathedral's churchyard.[8]

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Research Notes

Online Genealogy References:
WikiTree ID: Yale-928
FamilySearch ID: LD95-TTN

Further Reading:
- Yale, Max Brian. *Guide to the Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection.* 2025
- Yale, Max Brian. *Yale Family Coat of Arms* - Origin and History. *Max Brian Yale Genealogical Collection*, 2025

References

1. Yale, Rodney Horace. *Yale Genealogy and History of Wales*. Beatrice, NE: Milburn & Scott, 1908. Ref no. 15 p. 80

2. Dictionary of Welsh Biography: YALE family, of Plâs yn Iâl and Plas Grono Wrexham

3. Will of Thomas Yale, LL.D., proved 1 April 1578, Prerogative Court of Canterbury, PROB 11/59/190. For analysis of bequests to David Lloyd as evidence of parentage, see Peter G. Van der Poel, "Notes on the Yale Ancestry," The American Genealogist 32 (1956): 71-73.

4. Venn, John and Venn, John Archibald. Alumni Cantabrigienses Vol. IV Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1927. p 486

5. Clwyd Family History Society St. Tysilio

6. Denbighshire Churches Survey Yale Chapel

7. Wikipedia: Thomas Yale (chancellor)

8. Find a Grave. Memorial 297772690

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